



UNITED STATES COMMISSION  
FOR THE PRESERVATION OF AMERICA'S HERITAGE ABROAD

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CHAIRMAN

NEWS RELEASE

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U.S. and Bosnia and Herzegovina Sign  
Cultural Property Preservation Agreement

The United States and Bosnia and Herzegovina today signed an agreement on preserving places of worship, historic sites, monuments, cemeteries, and cultural archives of the peoples of the two countries. The agreement was signed in Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina (B.H.) by U.S. Commission for the Preservation of America's Heritage Abroad Chairman Warren L. Miller and B.H. Foreign Minister Zlatko Lagumdžija.

The agreement pledges the countries to --

- take steps to preserve the "cultural heritage" properties;
- cooperate in identifying and preserving such property;
- ensure equal treatment of all cultural groups in cultural property preservation and access laws; and
- establish a Joint Cultural Heritage Commission to oversee the effort.

The agreement places a special focus on cultural property of groups that the Nazis tried to exterminate, such as people of Jewish heritage.

(MORE)

## Cultural Property Agreement Add One

Miller said that the agreement is “symbolically” as well as substantively important, and would “help preserve a precious legacy for generations to come.”

He also explained the focus on cultural properties of groups victimized by Nazi genocide, saying “many properties that are an essential part of their heritages are endangered because the members of those groups who would have otherwise have taken care of the properties were killed or forced to flee from their communities.”

The United States has entered into similar agreements with the Czech and Slovak Federal Republic, Romania, Ukraine, Slovenia, the Slovak Republic, and Moldova. It is also seeking agreements with the other countries of eastern and central Europe. The countries also had people victimized by the Holocaust and later fell under the domination of the Soviet Communist regime.

The U.S. Commission for the Preservation of America’s Heritage Abroad is charged by law with negotiating agreements on the preservation of sites in eastern and central Europe associated with the foreign heritage of U.S. citizens in cooperation with the U.S. Department of State. It is also charged with identifying such sites, particularly endangered sites. The Commission, additionally, assists private site restoration efforts, sometimes with federal grants.

Prior to the signing, Miller visited the prayer house at Sarajevo’s historic Jewish cemetery. The Commission is administering a \$100,000 grant from the U.S. Congress that is helping to restore the building along with grants from local Sarajevo governments, private contributions, and work by a Norwegian organization.

The building is a cultural landmark that was seriously damaged in the recent Bosnian civil war. It is located opposite from what was called “Sniper Alley” in the fighting.

Miller said the project is one of many “examples of physical and social rebuilding” in Sarajevo “as streets and buildings are restored, and new representative social and political institutions are created.”